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Geneva

President: Mr. Gurirab ..... (Namibia)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

Proposals for further initiatives for social development

(a) Review and appraisal of progress since the World Summit for Social Development

(b) Proposals for further initiatives for the full implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development

The President: I give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Tessa Jowell, Minister for Employment of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Mrs. Jowell (United Kingdom): This special session on Copenhagen+5 follows closely on the recent Beijing+5 session, held in New York. It is right that the world should now take stock of progress since the two summits held five years ago. The Beijing+5 session was a great success and provided a new sense of direction. This session on social development must and, I am sure, will do the same.

Before the World Summit for Social Development five years ago, the role of social policy tended to be seen in isolation from the role of economic policy. Its potential contribution to economic growth was often underestimated. At Copenhagen, the international community agreed for the first time that economic and social policies must be mutually reinforcing. Sustainable long-term growth needs to be underpinned by effective social policies. Investment in effective social policies is economically productive.

We are here today to build on the achievements of that first world social summit. Our purpose is to assess the progress which we have made in meeting the 10 commitments agreed at Copenhagen. But we must also consider whether we need to set ourselves new objectives in the light of the changes which have taken place in the world over the past five years.

The 10 commitments provided a clear framework for countries to develop policies to promote social justice and to combat poverty. Earlier this year we gave an account to the United Nations of what we had achieved in our respective countries over the past five years. An analysis of our reports has shown that there is much still to be done. There are still 1.2 billion people in the world with a life expectancy of less than 50 years, as well as high levels of child and maternal mortality, child labour, illiteracy, ill health, suffering and squalor. There is still much to be done.

A lot has changed since 1995. Since Copenhagen, the process of globalization has gathered pace. It has been driven by new information technologies and the rapid movement of capital around the world. It is difficult to overestimate the consequences of this for all our societies. The financial crisis of 1997 and its aftermath demonstrated the vulnerability of developing economies to sudden flights of capital. Financial volatility has clearly increased as a result of

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globalization and advances in technology. These developments have highlighted the important role of social policy in ensuring stability through times of crisis.

There is now both a need and an opportunity for the international community to define the principles which should underpin the social policies of all our countries. One of the most useful things the Assembly can do at this session is to build on the Copenhagen commitments, and to agree on the need for an operational framework which individual countries can then apply. National ownership is crucial for the development of any effective social policy. It is essential to take full account of regional and national differences. For that reason, the United Nations is uniquely well placed to lead an exploration of the key aspects of social policy which underpin economic development.

But there is no question of trying to impose a blueprint on all countries. The aim must be to enable individual countries to set achievable standards for themselves and to develop policies that will result in balanced and sustainable development.

The challenge for our generation is to ensure that the new wealth and opportunities created by globalization are used to reduce global inequality. We must ensure that the one in five who still live on less than a dollar a day have the chance to lift themselves out of poverty.

That is the challenge at both national and international level. In the United Kingdom, child poverty increased threefold over the last 20 years, and we are now committed to eradicating child poverty within the next 20 years and halving it within the next 10 years. Thousands of children in the United Kingdom have been leaving school without even basic skills: 17 per cent of 16-to-25-year-olds with difficulty in reading and writing; 22 per cent with difficulties in numeracy. Tackling these problems is at the heart of our drive to raise standards in our schools and to equip all our young people for work.

The recent report by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) on child poverty said that children are kept in poverty not by a padlock to which there is a single key but by a combination lock that requires an alignment of factors if it is to be released. That is a very important message: no single key, but a combination lock. There is no single cause, no single answer to the problems of poverty and social exclusion.

That is the message of the Copenhagen commitments. They underline the need for social policy to be comprehensive and coherent if it is to be effective. The 10 Copenhagen commitments are the levers in UNICEF's combination lock. We must unlock the potential for growth and greater social justice across our societies.

In the United Kingdom we are trying to tackle the problems of poverty and social exclusion through integrated Government approaches that will deliver better education, improved public health, better housing and, most of all, young people who have the skills and qualifications to get and to keep jobs in the new knowledge-based economy.

Two weeks ago, when I addressed the International Labour Conference here, I announced the ratification by the United Kingdom of Convention 138, on child labour. The United Kingdom has now ratified all the core labour conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO). I also said that in a modern economy the key goal is to get as many people as possible into active employment, to increase the size of the labour force. That means removing obstacles to the employment of women, people from ethnic minorities, young people, older workers and people with disabilities.

That is what we need to do at the national level and that is what we need to do at the international level. The aim should be to secure a worldwide increase in the number of people in work. That is why I warmly welcome the Assembly's recognition of the need for a coherent and coordinated international strategy on employment and support for the convening of a world employment forum by the ILO in 2001.

What the world expects from this session is not just a collection of proposals but a programme of action building a platform for reform for the new century, underpinned by principles of economic and social justice. These reflect our best values and will deliver stability and growth for our societies. Let us work together to meet that challenge, turning our big aspirations into practical action.

The President: I now call on His Excellency The Honourable Steve Maharey, Minister of Social Services and Employment of New Zealand.

Mr. Maharey (New Zealand): I am delighted to represent the New Zealand Government in this important forum. The themes of eradicating poverty, promoting employment and fostering social integration and development strike a strong chord with the people of New Zealand.

We are a small nation, but one that prides itself on its creativity, its compassion and its leadership. We have a long history of progressive social policy stretching back over a century. More recently, New Zealand has developed a reputation as an equally enthusiastic economic reformer. We now enjoy strong economic growth. We are looking forward to an average 3 per cent per annum over the next three years, and unemployment is predicted to fall to about 5 per cent by March 2002.

But we have not found the process of reform or the pressures of globalization to be painless. Changes in the labour market have impacted on some of our people's ability to participate. Those with few educational qualifications, those in unskilled occupations and those in industries that used to be subject to trade tariff protection have experienced dislocation from the work force or lowered incomes. The indigenous Maori population and New Zealanders of Pacific Island origin have been disproportionately affected and, in some regions of the country, people have fared worse than others.

It is in this context of strong economic growth, but growing disquiet about disparities, that the newly elected social democratic Government, which I represent today, has set itself six goals which closely reflect the aims of the Summit. These goals are to develop an innovative economy which creates jobs and provides opportunities for all New Zealanders; foster education and skills development for all of our people; close social and economic gaps in our society; restore trust in Government and promote strong public and social services; treasure and nurture our environment; and celebrate our identity as a people.

A thriving and sustainable economy is central to our vision of a vibrant social democracy, but it must be an economy in which every New Zealander has the opportunity to participate. This means that, as a Government, we will continue to pursue sound economic management and policies to encourage and support our business sector. We will also pursue active social policies to lift the capability of our people to take up those opportunities and to ensure that all areas of our country benefit.

Investment in human capability is the foundation of our strategy to close the gaps in New Zealand society. This means investment in education through traditional means and through such means as public housing and health services. It means allowing Maori and Pacific Island people to design services for themselves so that they can define services that will improve their lives. It means improving the pathway from school to work.

Like many countries, we have an ageing population. We see that 80 per cent of our people who will be in the workforce in 10 years time are already there. We are therefore basing our future on life-long learning. Opportunities for education and training are extremely important to us if we are to develop peoples' capabilities throughout their lives. Education and training will also, of course, expand our economy.

Three out of four of our long-term unemployed are Maori or Pacific Island people. That is an overrepresentation we do not want to continue. We have therefore placed a great deal of emphasis on such things as literacy and numeracy skills to ensure that people are not excluded. The world of work must be fair. We are passing new labour legislation that will allow us to comply with all International Labour Organization standards and to ensure fairness in the workplace in New Zealand.

Greater social inclusion will not come just from better education services and fairer employment relationships. We also want a close partnership with communities. Communities know best how to define their future, so, in particular, we are helping communities, particularly Maori and Pacific Island communities, to lift their own capability to deliver economic and social programmes. This capacity-building is an investment in the future, helping communities to define their own problems and assisting them to provide solutions for their own people.

Social development is integral also to New Zealand's overseas aid programme. Official development assistance continues to be primarily focused on the Pacific Island States and on the developing countries of East and South-East Asia. The Government intends to ensure that it develops its aid towards the point of having 0.7 per cent of its overall

gross domestic product dedicated to assistance in foreign aid, particularly in education and in health.

In conclusion, as a small egalitarian society, we have shown social policy leadership in the past and we are determined to do so again in the future. The spirit of cooperation and commitment at this special session reflects the importance New Zealand and other nations attach to its goals. There is much in the Declaration and Programme of Action for us to affirm and build on, and New Zealand will surely play its part.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Sadoun Humadi, President of the National Council of Iraq.

Mr. Humadi (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure to congratulate you, Sir, on behalf of the Iraqi delegation, and to thank the Swiss Government for having kindly hosted this session.

Five years have elapsed since the holding of the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen in 1995. The choice of themes for the Summit attested to the recognition by the international community of the importance of making human beings the focus of development efforts. Today, however, we find that problems are more intense throughout the world than they were in 1995. While the developed countries have enjoyed sustained growth, most States of the South have faced economic crises as a result of increased poverty, inequality of income distribution and growing foreign debt. Moreover, economic sanctions have undermined the capacity for growth of many developing countries and increased the number of people living in poverty. That is why we support the proposal of the President of Tunisia for the establishment of a universal fund for solidarity.

Since the Copenhagen Summit in 1995, the Government of Iraq has striven to adopt a variety of measures in accordance with the Copenhagen Programme of Action in order to solve the problem of poverty. It has also sought to introduce reforms in the fields of health and education, to provide job opportunities and to implement many programmes in the field of social care. However, these efforts have been hindered by the unjust economic sanctions that have been imposed on our country since 1990, while the United States and the United Kingdom pursue their military aggression against us.

The past 10 years have seen an acute deterioration of the economic, social, cultural and health conditions of the Iraqi people. The Iraqi gross national product has fallen by two thirds. The World Food Programme has indicated that the cost of essential goods has increased 850-fold, dragging a large percentage of the Iraqi people below the poverty line. All health services have suffered serious deterioration. According to the report of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the monthly mortality rate for children under the age of five years has increased to about 7,000. Moreover, one fourth of children under age five suffer from chronic malnutrition. Before the sanctions Iraq had been able to eliminate illiteracy completely. But sanctions have reduced enrolment rates at all educational levels. The UNICEF report indicates that an entire generation of Iraqis has no link whatsoever with the outside world.

Decisions to place third world countries under sanctions have recently increased, despite the fact that such measures often result in heavy losses of civilian lives and property. No attempt is made to ensure that the Security Council complies with the legal rules contained in the Charter of the United Nations relating to the Council's actions. The Council has imposed comprehensive sanctions against Iraq for almost 10 years now, despite the fact that Iraq has complied with its relevant obligations. The Council should use its powers pursuant to the principles enshrined in the Charter, particularly with regard to Article 25. The authority entrusted to the Council under Article 24 is also subject to the Charter's legal rules on human rights and humanitarian standards. It is unacceptable for States harmed by such Council conduct to remain without legal recourse to, for instance, the International Court of Justice, which could pass judgement on the compliance of Council resolutions with the Charter and international law.

The lifting of the unjust embargo on the people of Iraq is a humanitarian responsibility shared by all, including those present at this special session. We urge those present here to renounce the use of the weapon of economic embargo. That weapon not only contradicts the foundations upon which this meeting is being held, but it also goes completely against the fundamental rules and principles of human rights. The Charter of the United Nations and international law prohibit genocide. If what is happening in Iraq is not genocide, then what is?

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable Burchell Whiteman, Minister of Education and Culture of Jamaica.

Mr. Whiteman (Jamaica): May I join my fellow delegates in expressing thanks to our hosts — the President, Government and people of Switzerland — for the hospitality they have extended to us; and to you, Mr. President, for your efforts and efficient conduct of the proceedings of this session. May I ask you to convey that to all the members of your team.

The World Summit for Social Development was a historic moment that attracted one of the largest gatherings of world leaders. Today, as we meet to assess the progress made since Copenhagen, that momentum has not been lost but, as many speakers have said, gaps remain to be closed by both developed and developing countries.

In Jamaica we have put in place several initiatives aimed at fulfilling the commitments made at the Social Summit. The country's social agenda embraces in particular three core themes of the Copenhagen Summit: poverty eradication, the expansion of productive employment and social integration. In this regard, it incorporates key elements such as the promotion of macroeconomic stability, human resources development, gender equality and the targeting of vulnerable groups such as children, youth, the elderly poor, disadvantaged women and persons with disabilities.

The Government has consistently reaffirmed its commitment to creating an economic, political, social, cultural and, most importantly, legal environment that will enable the nation to attain the desired level of social development. To this end an integrated system of social policy planning has been established through the Human Resources Development Council, which is a subcommittee of the cabinet. A series of reforms to the Constitution and the political system, including local government reform, has been initiated to foster greater democratization of the society. A national poverty eradication policy and programme was approved by Parliament, predicated on the commitment to promote social and economic development, to reduce the number of persons below the poverty line in targeted communities by 50 per cent over three years, and to eradicate absolute poverty in the long term.

The community has been made the central focus of efforts towards poverty eradication. The Jamaica Social Investment Fund, for instance, was created as a vehicle for community infrastructure improvement in response to a community's identified priority needs and with its involvement in the project from concept stage to completion. The National Social Development Commission works with those communities to establish capacity for implementation.

Strategic policies and programmes aimed at expanding employment and reducing unemployment for both men and women have been instituted. These include, very importantly, institutional support for the small and micro-enterprises sector, in the light of the growth in those sectors. A programme of reform and social investment — mainly in education, training and health services — has been implemented.

As a result of these efforts, notable progress has been made in the country's social development agenda, as can be seen, for example, in the reduction of poverty from nearly 30 per cent to under 20 per cent of the population over the last five years. It is of immense importance, therefore, that economic and social policies be integrated and be mutually reinforcing.

We take the view that even where resources are scarce and economic reforms take on added urgency, social goals cannot be subordinated to the dominant agenda for growth and market development. The State still has a central role to play, particularly in meeting the needs of the poor and other excluded and marginalized groups in society. Ensuring universal and equitable access to quality education and other basic social services remains one of its fundamental responsibilities and is of paramount importance to the attainment of social development.

Dakar and the meeting last month of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean both reaffirmed the central importance of education and training to higher productivity, greater social efficiency, increased well-being and greater cultural and political participation. It is against this background that our educational reforms have reached from primary through secondary education and, indeed, even to the tertiary level. At that level we have ensured that a State-funded student loan programme facilitates participation by the poorest quintile of the population, but we are conscious of the fact that their level of participation must increase.

Agenda item 8, with which we are now dealing, asks us for proposals for further initiatives for social

development. My delegation supports six proposals which, we believe, reflect the thinking within our region of Latin America and the Caribbean and which are also born out of our national experience.

First, as we seek not to renegotiate Copenhagen, but to advance it, can we also seek to harmonize both the language and the strategies which have emerged out of the various summits and special conferences of the United Nations on women and gender, education for all and social development? Can we consolidate in a meaningful way the principles and major strategies which inform Beijing, Dakar, Copenhagen and Geneva? And can we therefore produce a version that will find some resonance with all people in their communities, in their sectors, in their age groups and in their ethnic and geographic space?

Secondly, we also urge developing countries to support each other in more overt and direct ways by sharing best practices, particularly in the area of integrated social development. There are success stories in regions like ours that demonstrate the efficacy of empowering communities and community leadership to pursue the social development agenda. There is also a clear need to recognize and strengthen the interface between good governance and effective community participation, and between social development and economic planning at the level of the community. We in the Caribbean are beginning to learn from each other and to share experiences.

Thirdly, we support the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative as a positive step forward. We also applaud those developed countries that have, during this conference, called for the honouring of the 0.7 per cent contribution to official development assistance.

Fourthly, at the same time, there needs to be improved modalities in the conduct of business between the multilateral lending agencies and the bilateral donors, on the one hand, and the borrowing or beneficiary countries, on the other. We believe that there is room for more sensitivity and respect to be shown to developing countries in the conditions and processes affecting the provision of funding. Clearly, there needs to be integrity of projects and reasonable guarantees of sustainability, but, equally, it should be understood that a borrower or a beneficiary is fully cognizant of what is best for the country, in particular taking into account its cultural context and historical experiences.

Fifthly, all our countries need to review the assumptions which we make about economic growth, especially when economic growth is often so manifestly not accompanied by social development. We need to give special attention to harmonizing growth strategies with the basic human need for work, for wholesome employment, which is an important component of human and social development. Efficiency, increased productivity, competition in the market, more choices for the consumer, better prices: these are all desirable. However, when they come at the cost of jobs in the developing world, with almost full employment in the industrial societies, then all our brave words mean nothing if we do not look for new strategies to reverse that trend.

Finally, if it is true that the knowledge, information and technology revolution represents the future and that we are moving towards a world where new products and processes will demand and create more employment, then we must repeat what my Prime Minister emphasized at the G-15 summit in Cairo. There must be a deliberate strategy to put the new technologies at the service of the vulnerable and those who now do not have access, whether they be in the developing world or in pockets of deprivation within the developed and more affluent countries. Perhaps if we begin there, we stand a chance of seeing the world as Mr. Bertrand Piccard and Mr. Brian Jones did from their balloon circling the planet — as one human race in all its splendid variety, but with shared hopes, similar expectations and common potential.

This special session has identified the global changes since Copenhagen. We have been looking together at ways of demonstrating greater resolve and developing new strategies for action — and our peoples are demanding action and demanding it now. I believe we can and must respond. We have the will. Collectively, we have the means. We must accelerate the plan and act before it is too late. My Government remains committed to the task.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Moustapha Niasse, Prime Minister of the Republic of Senegal.

Mr. Niasse (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): Five years ago in Copenhagen, Denmark, our respective Governments met and agreed to address, jointly and in

a spirit of solidarity, the social problems confronting them, which, to differing degrees, are common to all countries throughout the world today, without exception. I refer in particular to poverty and its increasing prevalence among women, unemployment and underemployment.

All this is true. Five years ago, the international community as a whole solemnly reaffirmed its deep conviction that democracy, respect for human rights, transparency and the good management of public affairs were matters of priority and preconditions of the guarantee of social development for all, centred on the human individual and in respect for his or her dignity. In brief, nations took the historic decision in Copenhagen to make man the starting point and end of development.

In taking stock today, we must recognize here and now that the progress made in implementing the 10 commitments of Copenhagen have not met our legitimate expectations. Indeed, social inequalities within countries and between States and nations of the North and South have continued to grow. At the same time, poverty has expanded and famine and malnutrition continue to afflict many regions of the world today. The recent international financial crisis, which has not yet fully abated, and the controversial effects of globalization have also helped to exacerbate the social situation on the five continents. In addition to all this, we have seen the expansion of such endemic diseases as malaria, tuberculosis and AIDS. The exponential growth of the latter in the past few years, particularly on the African continent, poses a very serious threat to peace and development and, I must emphasize, a serious challenge to mankind.

Everyone knows and recognizes that progress has been slow over the past five years in terms of increased access to basic services, food and drinking water in particular. The World Education Forum, which was convened in Senegal by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in April this year, found it unacceptable that, in this third millennium, 113 million children should remain without access to primary education, while 880 million adults throughout the world remain illiterate.

In addition, we see an increasingly serious situation where child soldiers aged 8 to 14 — guns and grenades in their hands — are fighting in conflicts, including in Africa. The situation remains critical in Africa and in the so-called least developed countries, where indicators point to accelerated deterioration in living standards. In that context, in 41 of Africa's 53 countries, life expectancy is less than 60 years, and is sometimes about 40 years. Can this be acceptable? Why does it occur, and for how much longer will it continue?

In sub-Saharan Africa, 59 per cent of the urban population lives below the poverty line, in unspeakable sanitary, safety and unemployment conditions.

It is because of all these factors that achievements in the sphere of economic and social development have been endangered or even negated by armed conflict, with the resultant hundreds of thousands of refugees and displaced persons and the massive destruction of material resources, as well as by the AIDS pandemic, which we have all deplored.

The decline in official development assistance, which has already been noted by the United Nations and by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); the debt burden; and tariff and non-tariff barriers that limit access by African exports to the world market: these are obstacles in the already difficult efforts made by the countries of the South to escape underdevelopment.

This situation requires the involvement of the entire international community, because we are firmly convinced that no part of the world can live in peace and stability when other peoples are left in poverty or destitution. Even if it is agreed that it is the responsibility of each Government to meet the aspirations of its own population, it is no less true that the challenges of development remain universal challenges in this globalized world, where interdependence and solidarity among nations must be the golden rule.

In that light, the war on poverty must no longer be limited to speeches and good intentions. The war on poverty and underdevelopment requires concerted action by all. In that struggle we need not systems based on assistance, but genuine, responsible, mutually advantageous partnership based on consistent, open and practical reactions and mechanisms that will make a difference and will be effective and stable.

We are engaged in a huge programme of political and economic reform, and we wish at the same time to produce strong, competitive and lasting economic

growth. But we have to accept the fact that, as we say in Senegal, "you cannot eat economic growth". It does not in itself guarantee the dignity and fulfilment to which all the world's peoples aspire, as observed here three days ago by the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan. We share his views and echo the distress call he issued.

We must do all in our power, neglecting no possible action, to spare the world, today and in the future, from the tragedy of powerlessness and despair — and worse, from the scourge of poverty among peoples, nations, societies and States. What are we to do in the face of problems relating to the future of peace and of mankind? We must walk together hand in hand to win and not to lose; to live, to survive and to struggle, not to disappear in the rubble of war.

At the beginning of this hopeful new millennium and this new century, we need to pool our capital, including our human capital, to create a "virtuous circle" of high-quality growth that embodies what Mr. Michel Camdessus has referred to as the circular relationship among macroeconomic and monetary stability, the improvement of the environment and the reduction of poverty.

The future strategies of the international community and of its members — in North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe, Africa, Asia and the ocean countries — should be formed around this "virtuous circle", to lay the foundations of a new, human form of globalization that will be consciously and willingly fuelled by the inexhaustible resources of the human mind and of the culture of the universal. That is the price of peace. Are we willing to pay it?

In the face of the many obstacles it faces, my country, Senegal, must continue to work with other like-minded nations to rebuild the foundations of a society of participatory development. We are doing this by attaching high priority to improving the lives of poor and destitute families, orphans, disabled people who lack support and hope, women left on their own, abandoned and forgotten elderly people and other vulnerable social groups — without, of course, forgetting those who generate progress, who produce goods, services and growth for development. We have undertaken the commitment to do this in ongoing consultation and collaboration with all our partners, with civil society, with the private sector and with non-governmental organizations. We welcome the representatives of those organizations and thank them for their efforts on behalf of the world's peoples.

We must not be discouraged. The age of the Internet, the globalization of trade, emerging capital, culture, knowledge, science and technology transfers should enable human beings, with our hopes, expectations, dreams and capacity, to guide patiently, methodically and intelligently the changes inspired by our mission in history, evolution and the promotion of humankind.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Chedli Neffati, Minister for Social Affairs of Tunisia.

Mr. Neffati (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like first of all to warmly congratulate Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Namibia, on his election as President of this special session of the General Assembly. I would also like to congratulate the members of the Bureau on their election, and to wish them every success in their work. I would also like to convey my high esteem and respect to Mr. Kofi Annan for his constructive positions on humanitarian and other topical issues. My thanks also go to the Swiss authorities, who have made the holding of this special session possible under the best of circumstances.

This session, entitled "World Summit for Social Development and beyond: achieving social development for all in a globalizing world", is being held five years after the World Summit for Social Development at Copenhagen. At that Summit countries and international organizations committed themselves to work towards achieving various targets for integrated, sustainable development. We are called upon today to assess objectively what has been achieved, and to identify the difficulties that have prevented the attainment of the aspirations of the international community and the peoples of the world in the area of integrated social development.

Recent years have been marked by the establishment of a new order based upon market economy, liberalization of trade, globalization of the economy and the informatics revolution. This situation has made it possible to make a qualitative leap and substantial economic progress, at least for some countries. However, peoples' aspirations for greater equality and social justice have not received sufficient support from the international community, in particular

because of the reduction in financial resources granted within the context of official development assistance. That assistance currently amounts to a mere 0.2 per cent of the gross national product of industrialized countries. The example of certain countries in northern Europe that have met the commitment they made at the Copenhagen Summit is an exception.

This situation has accentuated the divide between nations, given rise to many economic and social crises, increased unemployment and produced diseases and other scourges for which poverty provides an ideal breeding ground. It has also aggravated the phenomenon of exclusion and marginalization that now threatens peace and stability throughout the world.

At the dawn of the new millennium, mankind has achieved rapid progress and development in a way that was not possible in previous centuries. Along with this economic prosperity we also see increased poverty and indigence in a large number of the regions of the world. This has increased the marginalization of those regions and prevented them from benefiting from the fruits of the new global economic order. The reports of international organizations — especially the United Nations Development Programme *Human Development Report* — are hardly more optimistic. Poverty has become one of the greatest scourges threatening the stability of societies in the course of the last few decades, sparing neither developed nor developing countries. In fact, over 1.3 billion persons live on less than $1 per day. The predictions of the specialized agencies are no more reassuring, as over 3 billion persons will be living on less that $1 per day by the year 2004.

The Secretary-General's report and the statements made at this session have described the difficulties faced by countries in achieving the Copenhagen commitments. Mention has been made of the debt burden, the rise in certain scourges and the reduction in international development aid. I note the considerable efforts made by Member States to achieve development in accordance with their capabilities, in particular with regard to social integration, employment and the eradication of poverty. Tunisia's report, the overall preparation of which has been undertaken by President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali since his accession to power, integrates the two approaches of economic and social reform. This lies at the centre of activities to ensure security and stability and to preserve a social equilibrium by cultivating the principles of dialogue, conciliation and national solidarity.

We have concentrated specifically on the creation of jobs for young people, in particular by encouraging them to create their own projects. Young people are also the beneficiaries of grants given by the Tunisian Solidarity Bank, and of the national employment fund.

Social integration programmes in Tunisia touch all groups of people and also address the needs of special groups.

Tunisia has also given priority to fighting poverty and has focused on the development of the country's most disadvantaged regions. This is being done through the 26/26 National Solidarity Fund, which benefits over 1,332 areas and over 171,000 families. Those families enjoy basic social services and benefit from income-generating activities. This has enabled us to improve our basic indicators and to decrease the rate of poverty, which is currently estimated at 6 per cent.

On the basis of his own experience in the field of solidarity, President Ben Ali has launched an appeal for the establishment of a world solidarity fund to be financed through voluntary contributions. This fund would supplement the various current mechanisms and arrangements and help make it possible to eradicate poverty and promote the development of the world's most disadvantaged regions, particularly in the poorest countries. We hope that this humanitarian proposal — which has the support of the African Group, the Arab Group, the Group of 77 and the first African-European summit, held in Cairo — will benefit from, and enjoy the support and acceptance of, those present here. I venture to express the hope that this special session will take this proposal on board and make it part of the new initiatives in the final declaration reflecting the various positions formulated by participating countries in the context of an overall consensus.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Alejandra Krauss, Minister of Planning of Chile.

Mrs. Krauss (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): This special session of the General Assembly is particularly meaningful for Chile in that it coincides almost exactly with the beginning of the third administration of a coalition that has been successful in three popular ballots since 1990. Like previous programmes, my Government's programme is based on the same

principles and values contained in the Declaration and Programme of Action adopted at Copenhagen. We want to make economic growth compatible with equality.

Our ongoing concern for social development has enabled us to make sustained progress in nearly every area of development. The report we have circulated gives a detailed account of our achievements during the 1990s. At the same time, we have implemented a set of second-generation reforms, the most relevant of which is no doubt the educational reform. We hope that reform will substantially improve the quality of education at the primary, secondary and higher levels. We also expect that the number of children enrolled in pre-school education will double over the next six years.

The broad consensus generated around the Programme of Action adopted in 1995 in Copenhagen has allowed us to reaffirm our commitment to continuing to promote social development in the face of new challenges. Given our achievements, particularly those attained over the past six years, today we are setting ourselves even more ambitious goals. Our Government has proposed the challenge of combining growth with equality. We would like to carry on in the path of economic growth, but we would also like to go forward with equal rights, strengthening citizenship. Growth with equality requires a coherent, integrated, participatory and tolerant society. The equality we seek is one that increases opportunities while respecting diversity. Growth with equality means strengthening human rights; guaranteeing the right of all to quality education; the right to an honest and well-remunerated job; and the rights to health and shelter. Growth with equality means increasing social development in order to attain increased human development.

Ms. Avila Seifert (Spain), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We are convinced that we cannot be satisfied with our own progress if we accept poverty, inequalities and social injustice beyond our borders. The responsibility for overcoming these problems falls to each of us. It rests primarily with each State and the organizations that make up civil society in every nation, but it also rests with the international system, which must seek to eliminate every difficulty that prevents or hinders social development in every nation. As expressed in the Copenhagen Declaration itself, solving such problems is a prerequisite to achieving and maintaining peace and security in and among our countries.

Five years after the Copenhagen meeting, the world is still experiencing wide-ranging changes. Globalization has set the stage of continuous exchange, information flows, instant communication and remote action. Opening economic boundaries increases competitiveness and imposes increasingly demanding requirements in terms of technological innovation and responsiveness to changing scenarios. Economic globalization and market performance have brought progress and development to our nations, but these elements have also raised concerns among a significant number of people who have failed to share in the prosperity and have found themselves lagging behind.

At the same time, new and complex social issues have emerged, requiring innovative responses that involve both the State and society as a whole. In the declaration that we expect to sign at the end of this session, these problems are described in graphic terms: the violence and insecurity endemic to big cities, ageing populations, unemployed youth, women's poverty, environmental degradation, neglected children and the demands of ethnic minorities. All these problems occur without distinction of income or borders.

The demands and responsibilities of our Governments are expressed in this great mandate for social integration, which allows barriers and inequalities to be overcome and progress to be extended to all without exclusion. This imperative forces us to open up more and improved opportunities in the fields of education, technology, science and ongoing labour training in order to allow people to exercise the right to employment. It enables workers to generate a secure flow of income for themselves and their families. It also compels us to improve the State's capacity to accept citizens in all their diversity, generating responses not only to such problems as poverty, quality of life and the satisfaction of basic needs, but also to such issues as the rights of third-generation citizens. These rights pertain to culture, identity, respect for minorities, the quality of social coexistence and the strengthening of democracy, all of which open new opportunities for decentralization and increased participation.

We must achieve these transformations in order to move from an era of change to a change of era, in

which everyone can grow in equality and freedom. The new era must require the integration of the weakest and most destitute. People and communities will be at the heart of change, which must arise from their own initiatives. Neither the market nor financial flows can drive these transformations, nor do we conceive these changes as being imposed by the authoritarian action of an enlightened elite guided by the technocratic views that have hurt us so deeply in the very recent past. Peaceful coexistence can be built when rights and obligations are clear to and respected by everyone. We must manage changes with responsibility, opening new space for people's freedom, while extending solidarity among nations, fostering creativity and enriching social cohesion in our communities.

A new way for humanity was outlined five years ago in Copenhagen. We truly believe that travelling that path will lead us to a more integrated world on sound and lasting foundations. Our country can attest to this because of what it has done for more than a decade as a result of the sovereign decisions of its citizens. We fully believe that, by the end of this decade, when Chile will celebrate the 200th anniversary of its independence, our country will be a fully matured nation of free people.

We would like to invite the community of nations to reaffirm the Copenhagen commitments and to make resolute progress towards the new horizons that we will agree here. In that way, we will be able to build a new kind of development, focused on the human being and safeguarding his or her dignity. Growth with equality is not a task for Chile alone. We would like to extend an invitation to the entire international community to take up this challenge and to make it an emblem of the history of humankind in the twenty-first century.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Gyula Pulay, Secretary of State of the Ministry of Social and Family Affairs of Hungary.

Mr. Pulay (Hungary): Let me start by congratulating Mr. Gurirab on his election as the President of the General Assembly at this very important session. I also compliment the Secretary-General on his outstanding preparations for this session.

Five years have passed since the world's heads of State and Government convened in Copenhagen in order to decide on collective action to combat the severe social problems arising around the globe. The Summit made a critical contribution to the recognition that these problems were not confined to the least developed countries, but that discrimination, poverty, unemployment and social exclusion were present in every society. While they may differ in extent by country, the same social and economic mechanisms causing these phenomena can often be captured universally. There is a need for the international community to unite its efforts and to take concerted action in order to mitigate and overcome these problems.

In the context of international cooperation, Hungary is actively involved in the implementation of the decisions taken at the Copenhagen Summit — and, in a broader sense, of the spirit of Copenhagen. In January 1999 in Budapest, we held regional tripartite consultations on the follow-up to the Copenhagen Summit, where we evaluated the Summit's effects on employment policy. We also attended the European meeting on social development organized by the Council of Europe and the Irish Government, which was focused on social integration, an enabling environment and the eradication of poverty.

We consider human rights and fundamental freedoms to be indispensable prerequisites for social progress. It is in that spirit that we took part in drafting and submitting for approval the International Labour Organization (ILO) Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. In that regard, we endorse the European Union proposal concerning the political declaration: that the principles incorporated in the ILO Declaration must be observed.

By ratifying Convention 138 on the minimum age of employment, Hungary completed its ratification of the core ILO conventions. We were among the first to ratify the ILO Convention concerning the prohibition and immediate action for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour, and we provide financial support to the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC).

The Copenhagen decisions have had a marked influence on our national policies as well. Looking back, the past five years have seen significant developments in the social sphere, of which we have given a detailed account in our national report, copies of which have been sent to all delegations. Let me highlight a few of those developments.

An unfavourable situation in the early 1990s, which was characterized by the persistence of high unemployment and a low participation rate, has been replaced by more favourable tendencies. There has been a shift in emphasis from an initial crisis-management strategy towards meeting growing labour demand, against a background of economic recovery, the development of economically depressed regions, an increasing number of active employment policy measures, and the upgrading of the vocational training system. The Government, having come into office in 1998, made a fresh start in setting employment policy objectives that were in full compliance with commitment 3 of the Copenhagen Declaration. It set as its priority the task of radically increasing the number of jobs, and it took measures to align its employment policy and economic strategy more closely. Employment figures of recent years have proven that policy right: unemployment fell to 7 per cent, while employment grew steadily and was 3 per cent higher in 1999 than in the preceding year. For 2000, a Government resolution on employment policy objectives already reflects the guidelines of the European employment strategy, setting as its goals steady employment growth and, in the long run, the achievement of the possibility of full employment.

We have taken important measures to promote equal opportunities for the disabled, along with their social inclusion and employment. Hungary has been awarded an international Roosevelt Prize for adopting legislation on equal opportunities and rights for the disabled, and for the measures taken in its implementation this year.

There is another area I wish to highlight, to which Hungary is devoting primary attention: the issue of strengthening the position of families, increasing respect for them, enhancing their security and supporting them in order to enable parents to rear their children in suitable financial conditions and in accordance with appropriate intellectual and moral standards. In order to attain those objectives, the Government has taken comprehensive measures whose importance is well illustrated by the 60 per cent increase over the past two years in budget allocations for support of families.

The paramount importance of this special session is that, by relying on the accomplishments of Copenhagen, the international community is aiming to address the challenges of globalization at the highest level. While we have taken advantage of the special opportunities offered by globalization and technological advances, social inequities, poverty and exclusion continue to persist. We have also realized that the creation of a better, more equitable world ensuring equal opportunities for all people requires stable economic policies, long-term social programmes and concerted international action.

My delegation sincerely hopes that the documents to be adopted at this Geneva session will contribute to the accomplishment of our common objectives.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Petro Ovtcharenko, First Deputy to the Minister for Labour and Social Affairs of Ukraine.

Mr. Ovtcharenko (Ukraine) (*spoke in Russian*): I am proud to be representing my country at this very important forum. It gives me pleasure to greet all participants in this special session. On behalf of the President and the people of Ukraine, I convey our thanks to the Secretariat for organizing this session, and to the Government and the people of Switzerland for their hospitality and their attentiveness to the participants both in the session itself and in the Geneva 2000 Forum for non-governmental organizations.

Mankind will never be able to live in peace unless people can enjoy security in their daily lives. How are we to attain that objective? Security can best be guaranteed by democratic, market-economy States with a strong civil society, in which human rights are respected and in which individuals are responsible for their own destinies. That is the path that Ukraine is continuing to take. For our Government, social progress is the principal indicator of success.

Demonstrating my Government's commitment to the Copenhagen commitments, further steps in that direction are being taken by the President of Ukraine, Mr. Leonid D. Kuchma, by the Government and by all our partners in civil society. Today, efforts are focused on creating conditions propitious for economic growth as a basis for improvements in the social sphere and for improving the standard of living. The programme adopted by Ukraine's new cabinet, led by Prime Minister Viktor Yushchenko, is entitled "Reforms for well-being", and its focus is on human beings. While proving to be rather slower than we had hoped, the process of restructuring the economy, the farming sector and the financial sphere is under way. We are

also reforming our laws and our social security system; we are providing targeted social assistance and helping entrepreneurs and the self-employed.

Over the past six months, we have seen that the country has the potential to carry out economic reforms that will shortly have social effects. After eight years of a falling gross domestic product, there has been an increase of 5.4 per cent in recent months. Industrial growth has also increased. But despite its efforts, my Government continues to encounter serious difficulties in ensuring social development. Creating a democratic market society from a subsidy-oriented economy is no easy task, and it is frequently accompanied by a drop in the population's standard of living; in our case, the situation is exacerbated by a need to overcome the negative effects of the Chernobyl disaster.

The Government is focusing on the search for solutions to these problems. Overcoming poverty is one of its priority tasks. Work is also continuing on programmes to ensure citizens' constitutional rights in the areas of employment and income, education, health, development of democracy and social integration. The Government is focusing in particular on socially vulnerable groups, first and foremost on children, because they suffer in particular from the economic crisis and drops in living standards; on women, who because of unemployment are unable to ensure the well-being of their children; and on invalids, who need not only material support but also social adaptation.

In an attempt to solve these problems under conditions of severe shortages in economic and other resources, Ukraine is trying to find the most rational way of focusing a very transparent and rational system of priorities. For example, we focused significant efforts on establishing social monitoring. Ukraine was the first country to undertake a study of child labour. Its study of living conditions, which is the basis for the development of the programme to combat poverty, was given high marks by the World Bank. Ukraine is also carrying out its "Children of Ukraine" national programme, whose basic task is to create favourable conditions for the multifaceted development of children and to ensure their legal and social protection.

Assistance from industrially developed countries to ensure more rapid integration into the world economy and trade of countries carrying out major reforms will certainly make possible new sources of financing. In this connection, we would like to point out the penetrating analysis of the present situation in Eastern European countries, and particularly that of countries with economies in transition, contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Copenhagen commitments submitted to the thirty-eighth session of the Commission on Social Development. We fully agree with its conclusion that the most important problem of countries with economies in transition is balancing State regulation of the economy with encouragement for private initiative.

Our delegation is interested in the initiative proposed by the Russian Federation here in this hall to carry out under the auspices of the United Nations a major, high-level regional conference to discuss the social development problems of countries with economies in transition and to seek additional resources to that end.

In achieving the goals established at Copenhagen, ensuring full, productive employment plays a very important role. We can say without exaggeration that this is precisely the key that will open the door to a socially integrated society. However, Ukraine needs to restructure its economy, with massive and very rapid privatization, including that of major firms. Our country's open-door policy, which is aimed at ensuring competition and maximum freedom of choice for the consumer, has led to unemployment. We are doing everything we can to develop an effective labour market policy, although results are still far from being what we would like them to be. We must take note of the importance of supporting opportunities for countries with economies in transition to overcome barriers to participation in the globalization of the world economy by ensuring that their products have access to world markets, ending tariff barriers and guaranteeing greater transparency and universality in multilateral trade.

We support the international community's efforts to develop further initiatives to implement the decisions of world meetings on social development. Our delegation is convinced that this special session of the General Assembly will be more oriented towards specific, practical activities. The concept of steady, human-centred development is set out in the draft political declaration and final document of this session and is in harmony with our vision of how to resolve socio-economic problems in Ukraine.

In conclusion, we would like once again to stress that Ukraine is open to mutually beneficial cooperation aimed at achieving harmonious social development.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Victor Ivanov, Vice-Minister of Labour and Social Protection of Kazakhstan.

Mr. Ivanov (Kazakhstan) (*spoke in Russian*): The Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action on Social Development indeed show that people should be the focus of our activities in ensuring sustainable development, overcoming poverty, ensuring full employment and encouraging social integration in order to create a stable, safe and just society for all. Globalization and the rapid development of technological advances have made social and economic development possible. But that development is also accompanied by serious problems due to widespread financial crises and the vicissitudes of markets and their effects. There are still very major obstacles to further integration and equitable participation in the world economy by developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

While noting the great significance of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, the Republic of Kazakhstan has identified priorities and is carrying out fundamental tasks contained in those documents. We have achieved macroeconomic stability and are developing democratic institutions. Measures are also being taken to ensure that economic policies are in place to bring about social development. Through a decree by President Nazarbaev we have put in place a long-term strategy for national development that identifies key aspects for our society's socio-economic development in the mid-term. The programme's priorities are a productive employment system in the formal sector, encouraging small and medium-sized businesses, developing microcredit, pension reform and minimum pensions, and strengthening social security. In implementing the programme, our Government is working to combat poverty and unemployment through a programme covering the years 2000-2002.

The regional employment programmes include sectoral initiatives developed working hand-in-hand with the labour unions, employers and non-governmental organizations. The aims are to reduce poverty, lower unemployment, ensure an active employment policy, target social assistance at poor citizens who are unable to work and at vulnerable groups of the population to protect them from unemployment and to ensure social and economic development in the country. The programme calls for Government budget allocations for social needs to reach 1 per cent of our gross domestic product.

Budgets for the years in question will include rules relating to the reservation of resources for the funding of targeted social assistance for low-income people depending on the need in each region.

In keeping with national policy and in cooperation with the trade unions and employers associations, we have concluded a general agreement ensuring coordination of activities in the labour market and protection of environmental and workplace safety.

We also recall the proverb that if one wants to help a man for just a day, give him food, but if one wants to help him for a lifetime, give him an education. Ensuring general education is one of the priority tasks of our State. Mandatory, compulsory free, secondary education is enshrined in our Constitution. We have a new educational system based on the principle of continuous education with four levels from primary through post-graduate education in keeping with international standards. This system has produced highly trained specialists.

In speaking to the participants of this social summit, I should like to draw the attention of leaders of multinational companies who have been investing in countries with economies in transition to the need to train specialists with up-to-date skills with a view to establishing competition and creating economic growth. It is our conviction that this makes possible a real reduction in poverty and an increase in employment.

We should also like to stress the link between unemployment, poverty and the drug business. The problems in combating the drug trade have slowly but surely in recent years become increasingly serious social problems.

Central Asia, and Kazakhstan in particular, have become a reliable transit corridor for drugs from the countries of the Far East, South-East Asia and elsewhere to Eastern and Western Europe. We are particularly concerned about increased drug use among young people. In the framework of the United Nations

project to map areas of cultivation of illicit drug crops in Kazakhstan, our Republic is seeking out the main cultivation centres for narcotic crops. In our opinion, this programme is the only realistic way of assessing risk factors and setting priorities in the campaign against drug abuse and, thus, against unemployment and poverty. We therefore call on the international community actively to fight this scourge, because individual States and international organizations cannot solve this problem alone.

In conclusion, we would note that Kazakhstan is ready to make every effort to enhance living standards, to participate in the drafting of initiatives and to ensure the implementation of the Copenhagen Programme of Action. At the dawn of the third millennium, aware of our responsibility to future generations, we are committed on our path towards social development and strengthening democracy. We call on all peoples, regardless of their social situation, and on the international community to join efforts to meet the general goal of building a more equitable and just world.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on Mr. Nudžeim Rečica, Assistant Minister for Civil Affairs and Communications of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Rečica (Bosnia and Herzegovina): When the World Summit for Social Development was held in Copenhagen in March 1995, Bosnia and Herzegovina was still suffering enormous war destruction. The 10 commitments adopted at the Summit represented the distant future for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Today, five years after the Copenhagen Summit, when we analyse the results achieved and progress made, we see that Bosnia and Herzegovina has the peace it eagerly wanted and that the commitments made in Copenhagen, especially those concerning national issues, are increasingly leading Bosnia and Herzegovina's everyday life on the path towards sustainable development. Unfortunately, on the way towards the full implementation of the said commitments, there are still many obstacles ahead.

Bosnia and Herzegovina's authorities are aware of the fact, which is becoming more obvious by the day, that, in the globalization process, international integration is the only possible way towards the establishment of sustainable social development, which must be mostly based on activities that we have to undertake at the national level, but which should be supported by the key international institutions and developed countries.

During the post-war period, concrete steps are being taken regarding the implementation of the provisions of the Copenhagen Declaration, particularly towards the establishment of the legal, economic, social and cultural bases of social development. A number of legislative regulations have been enacted in the fields of social policy, civil service and labour issues. Intensive efforts have been made to promote social and employment programmes, as well as to modernize the education process.

Nevertheless, a very difficult economic and social situation is our reality. The reasons for insufficient and slow economic and social recovery are the war waged in Bosnia and Herzegovina and its consequences, as well as a still unstable political situation in the region; the transition of the country's overall economy from the former socialist to the market economy; and the privatization process.

The consequences of the four-year war and enormous destruction are still strongly felt both in the economy and in infrastructure, and especially in the social infrastructure. Perhaps the strongest blow for Bosnia and Herzegovina was the fact that over half of its pre-war population became refugees and displaced persons, the majority of whom are still waiting to return. About 600,000 refugees and displaced persons have returned to Bosnia and Herzegovina, but of this number, some 200,000 are still waiting to return to their own homes. About 600,000 refugees abroad are waiting to return without having their status resolved in the countries in which they are staying. In addition, about 700,000 internally displaced persons in Bosnia and Herzegovina are waiting to return to their homes. This is a serious problem — not only politically, but also economically and socially — which Bosnia and Herzegovina cannot resolve by itself. The figures are extremely high, taking into account that the entire population of the country is 4.5 million.

As a result of the great war destruction, the economic transition of the country and the privatization process, the factor that has most heavily slowed both economic and social development is the employment situation. The unemployment indicators show that the number of unemployed today in Bosnia and Herzegovina is 2.5 times higher than it was in the pre-

war year, 1991. Expressed in figures, this statistic represents some 750,000 people looking for a job. The problem becomes even more complex when we consider that the number of the employed, compared to that of the pre-war period, has decreased.

Although the employment rate has tended to rise over the past five years, a great shock in the employment sector came with the demobilization of about 300,000 veterans in the years following the end of the war, as well as with the current extensive activities to reduce the military forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The social situation I have described is made even more complex by the fact that a large number of families in Bosnia and Herzegovina, whose breadwinners were killed, need to be provided for, as do the large number of disabled persons and civilian war victims.

Profound negative effects on the social picture in Bosnia and Herzegovina are produced by the circumstances of the country's pension and disabled persons' funds. Actually, these funds were emptied on the eve of and particularly during the war, but a financial basis was not provided for the replenishment of these funds, whose substantial property, which might have served for their replenishment, was destroyed or dispossessed.

With the aim of achieving sustainable social development in Bosnia and Herzegovina, under the supervision of the international community represented by the several international institutions existing in the country and led by the Office of the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as by the mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to my country, legislation was enacted to cover the basic property issues relevant to the return of refugees and displaced persons to their property. Considerable efforts are being made to consolidate the pension funds, under the patronage of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, and all regulations are being harmonized with those of the European Union and the Council of Europe, whose membership Bosnia and Herzegovina would like to join in the near future.

Owing to the privatization process that is under way — and which in fact has just been initiated — investment in the economy of Bosnia and Herzegovina has slowed down. Unfortunately, the social picture in Bosnia and Herzegovina has deteriorated due to the country's external debts. Actually, Bosnia and Herzegovina has been trying to meet its obligations by making regular repayments of its foreign debts in order to be able to apply at the same time for the new finances necessary to a sustainable economy and social development.

Agreements have been made on debt repayment and rescheduling with the World Bank and the London and Paris Clubs of trustees. However, the negative effects of regular servicing of the foreign debts are such that the annual amounts of debt repayment surpass the budgetary allowances appropriated by Bosnia and Herzegovina for education, social and health care and employment. Bosnia and Herzegovina is in the phase of structural adjustment programmes and stand-by arrangements with the IMF. It is indispensable to get acceptable conditions from the IMF and other international financial institutions in the transition period, which would at least partly alleviate the inevitable sharp cuts in the budgetary allowances for social care and education.

Bosnia and Herzegovina takes the view that, for developing countries, countries in transition and, especially, countries emerging from war and which are encountering broad-ranging humanitarian crises, either at home or in the region, it is necessary to find a new concept of debt rescheduling, softening credit requirements and debt write-off, if possible.

Bosnia and Herzegovina calls on the General Assembly at this special session, the Member countries and governmental and non-governmental organizations to pay special attention to the question of adopting special strategies, even burden-sharing and direct material support, for the countries most directly affected by post-conflict situations and special humanitarian crises. Bosnia and Herzegovina still has hundreds of thousands of refugees waiting for their houses and infrastructure to be rebuilt. Conditions should therefore be created for sustainable return. At the same time, as a member of the international community, Bosnia and Herzegovina regularly meets its international commitments concerning the issue of offering temporary asylum for displaced persons. Bosnia and Herzegovina accepted about 60,000 refugees from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia as a result of the conflict in Kosovo and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In addition to direct aid from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner

for Refugees (UNHCR), support for Bosnia and Herzegovina in providing social care, health care and education for these 60,000 refugees has been minimal, or even non-existent. It is therefore essential to have equal burden-sharing among countries that find themselves in such a situation, and to work out programmes of concrete aid.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has been making efforts to ensure transparent management, promote the anti-corruption struggle and establish the complete rule of law. Bosnia and Herzegovina sees an opportunity to achieve sustainable social development in the initiative taken recently through the establishment of the Stability Pact for South-East Europe, which is intended to create a safe environment for mutual development and cooperation among the countries of the region. We expect full support in the implementation of this very important project from the United States of America and from the countries of the European Union.

The presence of the international community and of international military forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina remains a necessity with the aim of implementing the Dayton Agreement and establishing Bosnia and Herzegovina as an open, democratic, multi-ethnic society of equal citizens, a society of equal opportunities irrespective of nationality, religion or political affiliation. Let the new Bosnia and Herzegovina be a country of equal opportunities for all citizens. Let knowledge and ability be the prevailing factors. A modern set-up and a democratic Bosnia and Herzegovina with a well devised social policy and with a modern and sustainable economy will be our contribution to global policy and to social peace and progress in the world. I urge members to help us in those efforts.

The Acting President: I call next on His Excellency Mr. Les Luck, Chairman of the delegation of Australia.

Mr. Luck (Australia): The Australian Government welcomes the opportunity provided by this special session for Governments to review implementation of the outcomes of the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development and to develop strategies for future action. The goals of Copenhagen cannot be achieved by States acting alone. The international community, the United Nations, multilateral financial institutions, regional organizations, local authorities, business, non-governmental organizations, communities and individuals all have a positive contribution to make towards achieving sustainable social development.

The Australian Government believes that the primary goal of this session is to create and support a framework for a working partnership among all those levels, recognizing rights and responsibilities. There are a number of areas in which this partnership is crucial, and none more so than managing globalization. As the Secretary-General has said, if we are to get the best out of globalization and avoid the worst, we must learn to govern better, and to govern better together. Partnerships between countries and with international financial institutions are essential to develop strategies to manage change and to ensure that the benefits of globalization are understood and are spread as widely as possible.

A good example of such partnership is the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative. Australia is a strong supporter of the Initiative. In addition to existing multilateral contributions, the Australian Government announced in April that it would provide 100 per cent bilateral debt forgiveness to countries which qualify for relief under the HIPC Initiative.

In the five years since the World Summit, Australia has taken seriously its own task of translating Copenhagen's commitments into international and domestic action. Australia is a major international development assistance donor in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. Our aid for education and training, health and population programmes, water supply and sanitation, and government and civil society has more than doubled in absolute terms in the last decade, and is now estimated to be around 40 per cent of total aid programme expenditure.

Australia sees good governance as an essential precondition for sustainable development, and as a cornerstone of effective national and international partnerships for achieving the Copenhagen goals. Where there is corruption, poor control of public funds, lack of accountability and transparency, and abuses of human rights, development inevitably suffers. Aid efforts for poverty reduction and sustainable development are also undermined.

Australia is active in the international promotion of good governance. In the period 2000-2001 Australia will spend approximately $245 million on assisting

partner countries to improve their economic, social, institutional and regulatory systems. During the recent session of the Commission on Human Rights, a cross-regional coalition of countries, including Australia, put forward a draft resolution on the role of good governance in the promotion of human rights. That draft resolution, adopted without a vote, recognized the importance of a national and international environment conducive to the full enjoyment of human rights, and also recognized the need in this context to promote partnership approaches to international development cooperation.

Australia is a society committed to the principle of fairness for all. Government policies aim to create a society in which diversity is celebrated, communities are cohesive and self-reliant, families are strengthened, and individuals have access to social and economic opportunities regardless of race, gender or disability.

The Australian Government has put in place a range of national policies consistent with the core social development objectives of the World Summit. We are committed to eradicating poverty in Australia by creating and maintaining a policy environment that permits sustained economic and employment growth, including by assisting unemployed people to re-engage with work and with their communities. Improvements in the structure and delivery of income support programmes also ensure an adequate social safety net for those at risk of poverty.

The Australian Government also has developed a range of policies specifically designed to assist low-income families, youth, women, people from aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or non-English-speaking backgrounds, and people with disabilities, to obtain and retain employment. Australia has a long history of ensuring that all Australians have universal and equitable access to primary health care and to education. The Government's contribution to primary health care for indigenous Australians in particular has quadrupled over the past decade, and the Australian Government has also made educational equity for indigenous Australians a key national priority.

The Government's policy approach to social development also recognizes the importance of strong families and communities: they provide the most effective social support systems and are crucial to maintaining a cohesive and compassionate society. Specific strategies are in place to support rural and remote communities and to minimize the particular disadvantages they experience.

The Australian Government also believes that national social development goals cannot be achieved by government action alone. We recognize and value the contribution that can be made by civil society and by the community towards developing innovative and effective solutions to social development problems. The Government has sought to develop a social coalition or partnership to bring together the experience and insights of a range of organizations — churches, voluntary organizations and all levels of Government — in developing and implementing social policy. We are also actively seeking to improve the capacity of our institutions, communities, businesses and individuals to support our social development.

The Government is encouraging greater corporate and individual philanthropy, whereby those who have benefited most from society's opportunities can contribute in practical ways to assisting the less fortunate. A high-level board of corporate and charitable organizations chaired by the Prime Minister has been established to pursue this issue and to encourage brokerages between the corporate and charitable sectors.

The Government is seeking to develop further the principle of mutual obligation in welfare reform, whereby those who benefit from government support have an obligation to give something back to the community in return. This initiative is about creating working partnerships between the Government and other stakeholders that recognize both rights and responsibilities and provide an environment conducive to economic improvement.

Australia very much hopes that this special session will create a lasting framework for a working partnership between all levels of the international community to further implement the commitments of the Copenhagen Declaration.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Marco Antonio Suazo, Chairman of the delegation of Honduras.

Mr. Suazo (Honduras) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to join others who have spoken before me in thanking and congratulating you, Madam, on your election to preside over this special session of the General Assembly devoted to social development.

I have the honour to address the Assembly on behalf of the people and the Government of Honduras, under the leadership of Mr. Carlos Roberto Flores Facussé. I would also like, on his behalf, to thank the people and the Government of Switzerland for their hospitality in hosting this session.

The various social development topics being dealt with at this session are of perennial importance for our country. Ours is a developing country vulnerable to natural phenomena, the negative impact of globalization and the crushing weight of external debt. In the next few days, we shall assess the developments and achievements that have been made to date with regard to social development since the holding of the World Summit for Social Development at Copenhagen, five years ago.

Honduras's Constitution guarantees the rights to liberty, health and education without regard to race, gender, religion or social status. Conscious of its social responsibility, and in adherence to its Constitution, the Government of Honduras has in the course of recent years put in place a series of laws aimed at protecting the most vulnerable groups of our society. Those laws include, for example, the law against domestic violence, the code of childhood and adolescence, the law creating the National Institute for Women at the level of State secretariat, the law on HIV/AIDS and the recently approved equal opportunity law. These laws constitute a part of the commitment we undertook at Denmark and are intended to lead to the establishment of mechanisms and structures that ensure social justice in our country.

Despite the achievements it has attained, Honduras has suffered the consequences and negative effects of globalization, which, along with the external debt, pose a serious obstacle to making progress on the goals established by the Government in the social sector. The majority of our people live in poverty, and they struggle on a daily basis alongside our Government to eradicate the structural causes of poverty, under which — according to the statistics of international financial institutions — half of our families live.

Added to the already serious economic situation in our country resulting from foreign debt and structural adjustment measures, our nation — which through enormous efforts had been satisfactorily meeting the basic needs of the population — has also had to face the devastating effects of the natural phenomenon that everyone here knows as hurricane Mitch, whose legacy of death and destruction in our country is known throughout the world. To date, we have not been able fully to repair the damage to road infrastructure caused by it.

It is for this reason that in January of this year my delegation supported the adoption of General Assembly resolution 54/202, entitled "Enhancing international cooperation towards a durable solution to the external debt problem of developing countries". That resolution welcomes the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative and reiterates the call for industrialized countries that have not yet contributed to the Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility, now renamed the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility, to do so as soon as possible. It also expresses its appreciation for the action taken by the creditor countries of the Paris Club with regard to the debts of countries affected by hurricane Mitch, and reiterates the need for debt relief promises to come to fruition within the shortest possible time-frames in order for our countries to be able to free up the requisite resources for reconstruction efforts.

Our Government would like to reiterate its firm commitment to make progress in the implementation of social sector projects to benefit its citizens. To that end, the Government of Honduras has established funds and developed programmes and projects in the housing, health and education sectors. Moreover, the Government has created incentives for families that include financial assistance to promote greater access to public schools throughout the country. Of particular importance among those programmes, projects and funds are the Honduran Social Investment Fund, the Honduran Fund for Productivity and Housing and the Social Fund for Housing. Programmes include the Family Allowance Programme, the Comprehensive Development Programme for Women and the Honduran Community Education Project. For its part, Honduras's National Congress has established an office for social planning and a system that disseminates to the population information on every social sector law adopted by the Congress. These institutions, along with the laws I mentioned earlier, are the most concrete actions taken to date by the Government of Honduras. They are also proof of our Government's firm resolve to provide all Honduran citizens with the most essential basic services and to meet their needs.

Although the Denmark goals assumed by our Government have not been fully achieved, the commitments we undertook have served as the basis for our actions. I would like to point out that in this connection all of us do not share either the same financial resources or the same levels of development. It is therefore inconceivable to rigidly expect the goals to be achieved to the same degree.

Finally, we believe that the international community, and developed countries in particular, are primarily called upon to respond to the commitments to be made at this session. Specifically, that response should come by way of increasing official development assistance. There is also an ever-increasing need for changes to be made to the international financial institutions. They must be given a human face.

If we believe that the worst injustice is economic iniquity that prevents us from meeting the basic needs of human beings, then it is up to those who have more to help those who have less. This must be done if we want true social justice in this millennium.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Carlos Santos, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Human Development, Women and Civil Society of Belize.

Mr. Santos (Belize): I would like to thank the General Assembly, on behalf of the Government and the people of Belize, and of our Minister for Human Development, Women and Civil Society, for the opportunity to address its twenty-fourth special session.

My delegation wishes to give special thanks to the Government and the people of Switzerland for their kind hospitality and attentiveness.

The Government of Belize sees social equity as one of the most critical elements of sustainable development and has, since our meeting in Copenhagen, worked actively towards creating the necessary policies and mechanisms to reflect this new development approach. We are well on our way to instituting a tradition of cooperation and collaboration between and among government agencies, as well as with civil society organizations, to ensure that development benefits people, especially women, children, youth, the elderly, the poor and the disadvantaged. This shows that social development has been prioritized and that development means not only improvements in the traditional economic indicators, but also in the standard of living and the enhancement of the quality of life of all the people.

Belize has taken its commitment seriously and has, over the last five years, focused its attention on the three core issues addressed in the Copenhagen Declaration: poverty reduction, expanding productive employment and improving social integration. Please allow me to expand on these.

As to poverty reduction, Belize has remained engaged in promoting the agenda of social development and has developed a National Poverty Elimination Strategy and Action Plan. This Plan spells out in an integrated manner the range of policies and activities to be undertaken to eliminate poverty. The six main components of the Plan are economic growth; investments in human capital; investment in health services and health care delivery; housing, shelter and human settlement; social vulnerability and safety nets; and protection and conservation of the environment.

This Plan is comprehensive. It focuses on the economic empowerment of individuals and communities rather than on welfare. It calls for health reform, education reform, land administration reform, social security reform, literacy and the building of democracy and local governance. I am proud to report that, even while this Plan was being developed, the Government wasted no time in beginning to implement some of these activities.

We are developing our National Health Insurance Scheme to improve access and equity in the health-care system. We will soon be launching our literacy campaign. We have passed an act to give more autonomy to local government bodies. We are building homes. We are conserving the environment. We are piloting community co-management schemes. We have passed legislation to protect women from abuse. We have made the reporting of child abuse mandatory. We are revamping the Ministry of Labour to be more responsive to workers' needs and the minimum wage for female-dominated jobs is being revised. And, yes, Belize is blazing the trail in our region in gender mainstreaming.

These are but a few of the things we are doing to eliminate poverty. Other more controversial issues are also being addressed, such as the practice of expelling pregnant students from school and the firing of unwed pregnant teachers. Furthermore, a National AIDS

Commission has been established and tasked with reducing the incidence of HIV/AIDS in Belize.

Three outstanding issues remain. The first is the need to bring macroeconomic planning more in line with measures outlined in our poverty Plan. The second is understanding and addressing the feminization of poverty. The third is developing measurable indicators to effectively monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Plan.

The Government of Belize is resolute in its commitment to eradicating poverty and remains convinced that the test of a country's progress is not just whether we add more to the abundance of those who have, but whether we provide enough opportunities to those who have too little.

As to expanding productive employment, this area is one of the top priority areas for the Government of Belize. In its Party Manifesto, it pledged to create 15,000 new jobs during its term of office from 1998 to 2003. Both the National Strategy for the Elimination of Poverty and the Medium-Term Economic Strategy address this issue quite extensively. Some of the Government of Belize's major programmes include encouraging self-employment for poor households through access to credit and training for small-enterprise development; supporting or developing programmes to increase the capabilities of young men and women for entry into the labour market; and implementing a national policy for tourism, which emphasizes ecotourism and ensures the participation of small and medium-sized Belizean companies in the sector, including community-based and owned ecotourism facilities.

Our commitment in Copenhagen in relation to the issue of productive employment was to expand the quality and quantity of employment opportunities in Belize. Data collected by the Central Statistical Office of the Ministry of Finance indicate that the unemployment rate is slowly decreasing and in 1999 stood at 12.8 per cent. When these figures are disaggregated by sex and age, however, those sectors of the population with the highest unemployment rates remain women, young men and young women. A great deal of work is thus yet to be done in this area if our commitment to reduce unemployment is to be sustained over the medium to long terms.

Concerning social integration, Belize has been relatively successful in its efforts towards immigrant assimilation. Belize is one of the few countries in the world that boasts a multiplicity of cultures and people living together in peace, tranquillity and harmony. This did not just happen, however. Successive Governments have put in place the necessary policies, programmes and strategies that have facilitated this process. Just over one year ago, for example, the Government of Belize implemented an amnesty programme that sought to legalize all displaced and illegal immigrants. The processing of all applications is about one third of the way complete and, as of May 2000, some 5,000 people had been issued permanent residences.

While we can hold our heads high in the international arena over the fact that we continue to be a haven for our less fortunate brothers and sisters in Central America, we continue in our efforts to assimilate our most recent immigrants from South-East Asia. This is proving to be a more difficult task than we anticipated and will require greater participation from all parties concerned, including the immigrants themselves.

The issue of social integration also includes the strengthening of partnerships between government and civil society and the promotion of local-level governance. Some of the key elements of Belize's national strategy to strengthen the partnership between Government and civil society and to support local government mechanisms include the establishment of systematic training for male and female participants within local-level mechanisms for governance; the mobilization and empowerment of community organizations to define and act on local social and economic issues important to them; the establishment of a Ministry of Civil Society in January 2000; and the decision to develop a National Human Development Agenda for Belize.

It is noteworthy that the thrust of the majority of the reforms being proposed by a political reform committee appointed by the Government of Belize, which recently released its recommendations following nationwide consultations, is towards taking power away from ministers and bureaucracies and giving it more directly to the people. This concept, I believe, was ideally captured in our Prime Minister's millennium address on 1 January 2000, when he said:

> "What we are talking about here is the empowerment of civil society: people organized

in non-governmental bodies that work together with government for the benefit of the people."

The Prime Minister goes on to say that

"an issue central to the elimination of poverty is the strengthening of civil society institutions and decision-making processes based on partnerships between central Government, non-governmental organizations and local organizations, such as town councils, village councils and other social groups".

In conclusion, while significant gains have been made in the fight against poverty, we are still not where we want to be or should be. No country, no leader, no individual should be satisfied while a significant portion of our people goes to bed hungry, cannot find meaningful employment or does not participate equitably in the development process. But the task of eradicating poverty, ensuring social integration and expanding employment opportunities requires the cooperation and collaboration of all the stakeholders in our society, including our international development partners. In this respect, Belize expresses its sincere appreciation and thanks to our United Nations partners who continue providing invaluable support and assistance in all our efforts. For this and more we are grateful.

The Government of Belize is firmly committed to the pledges made at the social development Summit in 1995, and will continue its efforts to carry them out. For this, however, we will require the full support of all our partners in development.

Unfortunately, like most other developing countries in our region, Belize is faced with the effects of globalization. We realize that action to eliminate poverty must be swift and innovative if we are to prevent the impending crises that globalization can bring upon us. The "invisible hand" that rules global economic policies seems to be the very hand that foments poverty and unrest in countries such as ours. When our banana quotas are taken away, it breeds poverty among our people; when we cannot protect our farmers or our small businesses, the effect is the opposite of social development; when we are forced to sell our raw materials at prices below production costs and to import products at exorbitant prices, we are exacerbating the sorry plight of our people. What we are saying is that while globalization and trade liberalization continue to rear their ugly heads, it is incumbent on all of us at this special session of the General Assembly on social development to ensure that they are accompanied by an equally conspicuous human face. Our peoples deserve nothing less.

The President: I give the floor to Mrs. Hiwet Zemichael, Director-General, Department of Social Affairs, Ministry of Labour and Human Welfare of Eritrea.

Mrs. Zemichael (Eritrea): On behalf of my delegation, I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to preside over this important special session of the General Assembly. Allow me also to extend the best wishes of my Government to the representatives gathered at this session. It is indeed an honour and a pleasure for my delegation to attend the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly to discuss the achievement of social development for all in this now-globalized world of ours.

When Eritrea emerged as Africa's youngest sovereign State in 1993, it inherited tremendous social and economic problems. Decades of foreign occupation, neglect and war had made their impact on all segments of Eritrean society and on all levels of national development. The economic, social and infrastructure standards and other common indicators of development levels suggested that nation-building had to start from scratch. The Government of the State of Eritrea believed that sustainable development could be achieved only with the development of the Eritrean human person. The development of human resources virtually depends on education and training, with education being the priority.

Since independence, the Government's vision of a new Eritrea has focused on creating a modern, market-oriented economy with a leading role for the private sector. That is an overriding national development objective. To achieve that objective, the Government developed an integrated national development plan whose major components are: development of human resources, with education and health as key inputs; promotion of the private sector; development of infrastructure to remove critical bottlenecks; development of industry and agriculture; restoration and protection of the environment; introduction of comprehensive national security schemes; rehabilitation of vulnerable groups; and promotion of gender issues.

Macro and sectoral policies have been formulated to respond to present and future needs. These are intended to serve fundamental principles, which include the maintenance of national unity, renewal of active participation by the population, and recognition of the decisive role of the human factor in working towards the prevalence of social justice, internal dynamism and effective governance. Although the level of social development in Eritrea today is still comparatively low, a great deal has been achieved in education, especially in building school facilities and making education accessible to children in their own mother tongue, and currently about 52 per cent of all school-age children attend school. The same can be said about the health sector. Other sectors, particularly infrastructure, including road construction and communication, have attained the minimum standards in terms of the services required for economic takeoff. These improvements are most noticeable in the countryside.

The private sector has been a focus of attention. The reintegration and rehabilitation programmes for disadvantaged groups that have so far been implemented have shown remarkable results. Indeed, all the achievements made are quantitatively significant and have contributed much to the positive change in the quality of life and the attitude of the Eritrean people.

The progress achieved to date, however, should only be considered the beginning. We are fully aware that there are many challenges ahead of us. It is these challenges that the Government of the State of Eritrea is addressing with its limited resources.

I would have wished to dwell more on the development opportunities that could be realized in Eritrea. But the present situation in the country is overwhelmed by external threats. Allow me, therefore, to talk a bit about these threats, since they have a tremendous negative impact on our effort to provide development opportunities for our people.

One of the major impediments to development in Eritrea is the current war with neighbouring Ethiopia. The war with Ethiopia, which broke out in 1998, has resulted in the wanton destruction of property. The invading Ethiopian forces destroyed the social and economic development infrastructure that had been built over the past eight years of freedom and peace. Ethiopian troops systematically looted, burned and destroyed with explosives private and public property in all the areas they occupied. In addition to the deaths of many civilians, mostly women, children and the elderly, Ethiopia's invasion also led to the displacement of about 1.6 million people in Eritrea. This displacement figure, which amounts to more than one third of Eritrea's population, has been confirmed by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Indeed, Ethiopia's invasion has led to a major humanitarian crisis that ought to draw the attention of the international community.

To compound the injustices the Ethiopian regime has committed against Eritreans, that regime also deported over 70,000 Eritreans and Ethiopians of Eritrean origin from Ethiopia under the most inhuman conditions. All of them had their property confiscated, and most families were separated.

This is a very traumatic experience that has been perpetrated against the Eritrean people by Ethiopian regimes for a second time, with a respite of only one decade. Ethiopia has this time deliberately targeted not only the human resource of Eritrea, but also the development gains Eritrea has made since its independence in 1993. This is indeed a crime. What is more painfully unjustifiable, however, is the apparent silence of the international community in the face of this naked crime.

Conflicts pose serious obstacles to the attainment of social development. Sustainable development is unattainable without peace. The ambitious targets and policy objectives articulated at this special session of the world body will remain mere platitudes for many countries unless they are accompanied by concrete measures of collective action and solidarity against injustice, war and aggression. I therefore appeal to those present here to devote special attention at this session to the guarantees for social justice and the prevention and peaceful resolution of conflicts.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Danzannorov Boldbaatar, Chairman of the delegation of Mongolia.

Mr. Boldbaatar (Mongolia): The peaceful advancement of the human family and its safe livelihood can no longer be sustained in a world permeated by abject poverty, the external debt burden, growing technological and economic gaps between the rich and the poor, widespread hunger and malnutrition, violence and discrimination, drugs and infectious

diseases. Mindful of the urgency to adequately tackle these problems, the international community has addressed them by, inter alia, organizing a series of world summits and conferences and by proclaiming and observing United Nations decades and international years on specific social issues and target groups. The Copenhagen Social Summit was one such world forum. It demonstrated that social development is indeed a question of global concern, and therefore the implementation of its decisions requires special attention. The cumulative result of the conferences offers a strong basis for promoting development cooperation and identifying the United Nations role of the United Nations in this area.

Development cooperation has rightly been given people-centred, sustainable gender-sensitive and social dimensions. Mongolia attaches great importance to the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly under the theme "World Summit for Social Development and beyond: achieving social development for all in a globalizing world". We note with appreciation the Secretary-General's comprehensive report, which provides us with a clear overview of the progress achieved during the last five years and the challenges that lay ahead. We believe that achieving the goals of Copenhagen will require much more comprehensive action, political will and adequate financial resources.

Mongolia, like many other countries undergoing fundamental changes, has been grappling with the challenges of transition for the past 10 years. Market reforms have been boldly accelerated by the liberalization of trade and prices and by large-scale privatization and other economic measures. Following the Copenhagen Summit, in 1995, the Government of Mongolia introduced a two-phased national unemployment reduction programme covering the years 1996-2000 and 2000-2010. This programme is being implemented in close synergy with the national poverty alleviation programme and the national plan of action for the advancement of women.

The main policy measures aimed at reducing unemployment and promoting productive employment included, inter alia, institutional capacity-building; improving the legal framework with regard to labour relations; promoting self-employment; promoting cooperatives; mobilizing local resources for employment generation; and training and retraining programmes. Aside from those measures, unemployment benefits and tuition expenses for retraining the jobless have been introduced as part of a safety net. The national poverty alleviation programme sets forth the task of supporting employment of the poor segments of the society, promoting education and medical services, and setting up and strengthening a network of social welfare and care for the extremely poor.

Recently, the Government of Mongolia has adopted the second phase of the national poverty alleviation programme, entitled the National Programme for Support of Household Livelihood Capacity. This new Programme is close to family or household issues. In other words, it will cover issues pertaining to all members of the family, including children and youths and disabled and elderly persons.

In the last 10 years, the country developed a relatively sound system of data collection on employment and poverty issues. As a result, an institutional structure for overseeing social welfare services and activities was put in place. The surveys conducted jointly by the National Statistical Office and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1995 and 1998 show that despite an increase in the workforce resulting from steady population growth, the rate of employment had been dropping, thus breeding poverty. The poverty growth index in 1995 was 10.9 per cent, and in 1998 it was 11.7 per cent. Therefore, much still needs to be done.

To adequately address social problems, the Government of Mongolia is mobilizing all possible resources and means and is implementing different programmes and projects. For these reasons, in the foreseeable future external assistance and support will still be important.

Last month, we held a seminar in Mongolia supported by UNDP and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) on the emerging concept of human security. The debate here at this special session echoes much of our discussion during that seminar. Employment is a basic precondition for ensuring human security at the level of households. Health, as well, is one of the important components of basic human needs and that of human security. An individual living in any country today links his or her daily life guarantees to the security of his or her own life and that of his or her family, income and the future of their children.

Finally, I am confident that this special session of the General Assembly will mark an important step towards advancing social development and implementing of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo, President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

President Obasanjo: Let me first say that I am happy to see you presiding over this Assembly. I am sure that, under your able guidance, this session will achieve its set objectives. May I, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, convey to you and the members of your Bureau our deep appreciation for making this important occasion a reality.

I also wish to congratulate the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and his very capable team for the excellent report that has provided the basis for the work of this session. My sincere gratitude and appreciation also go to the Government and people of Switzerland who accepted to host this Summit. We have, since our arrival, been treated to the sumptuous hospitality for which this country has become well known.

We in developing countries attach great importance to this gathering, which we hope will give delegations the opportunity to debate and adopt a document that will go a long way towards assuring our people improved quality of life. Five years ago, the largest-ever gathering of heads of State and Government converged in Copenhagen and committed itself to certain principles of social development. Among other things, world leaders committed themselves to creating an economic, political, social, cultural and legal environment that would enable people to achieve a better standard of living.

Towards this end, national Governments were enjoined to provide a stable legal framework, in accordance with their respective Constitutions and consistent with international law and obligations, that includes and promotes equality and equity between women and men; full respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law; access to justice; the elimination of all forms of discrimination; transparent and accountable governance and administration; and the encouragement of partnership with free and representative organizations of civil society.

They also pledged to collectively address the underlying causes of poverty, unemployment and social exclusion in order to improve the quality of life for all our peoples. Other commitments that were entered into at Copenhagen included creating the necessary enabling environment that would help people to achieve social development; eradicating poverty by a target date; supporting full employment as a basic policy goal; attaining universal and equitable access to education and primary health care; accelerating the development of Africa and the least developed countries; ensuring that structural adjustment programmes include resources allocated to social development objectives; increasing resources allocated to social development; and strengthening cooperation for social development through the United Nations. In short, at Copenhagen, the international community attempted to place people at the centre of development. It was a unique opportunity for the international community to open a new chapter of cooperation in the implementation of the social development agenda.

As many will recall, I attended that meeting and was therefore a first-hand observer of the overwhelming resolve of the international community to pursue people-centred social development. But I did not return to my country to witness this social transformation. On the contrary, I returned to my country to become a direct victim of the very vices which the Summit had sought to eradicate. I was immediately apprehended on my arrival on a trumped-up charge of planning a coup — a thing I could not do even when I was in uniform. I was subsequently imprisoned. My real offence, if an offence it was, was that I stood and campaigned solidly for democracy and good governance. And so it was that my ordeal seemed to throw into question the very rationale behind the principles of justice enunciated in the Copenhagen Declaration.

My own experience was not, however, unique. There were many such instances, which only go to illustrate the continuing resistance to the type of changes envisaged in the Copenhagen Declaration. My only happiness is that, in spite of this resistance, the world has continued to move forward and great strides have been recorded in the implementation of the commitments entered into in 1995. The world has

gained many success stories to tell since the last Summit.

No one should deny that we have made significant social and economic gains in the last few decades. Life expectancy in developing countries has increased from 46 to 64 years. The infant mortality rate has been reduced by 50 per cent, while there has been a more than 80 per cent increase in the proportion of children enrolled in primary schools. Access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation has similarly been doubled.

But the picture is not as rosy as it seems. The progress is not at all universal and, in many instances, things have got worse. The resistance which I talked about earlier still continues in many forms and in many countries. A large proportion of humanity still remains desperately poor. In this respect, I could not agree more with the observation of Secretary-General Kofi Annan that extreme poverty is an affront to our common humanity and makes many other problems worse.

This special session is taking place at a time when there is a crisis of legitimacy about globalization, in part because sufficient attention has not been given to its social dimensions and implications, especially the growing inequities and the marginalization of large parts of the developing world. At the last summit meeting of the leaders of the South countries, which was held in Havana, Cuba, and which I had the honour and privilege to chair, the impact of globalization on the economies of developing countries was thoroughly analysed and debated.

In the end, the Group of 77 agreed that globalization is a process which can be uneven and unpredictable, but that if it is properly harnessed and managed, the foundations for enduring and equitable growth at the international and national levels can be laid. The Group of 77 therefore agreed to respond to globalization with a view to making it beneficial for all countries and all peoples, and to actively promote effective participation by developing countries in international economic policy decision-making in the context of the globalizing world economy.

Despite the fact that many Governments, especially in developing countries, have made poverty alleviation goals the centre of their national policy agendas and have adopted programmes and strategies aimed at poverty reduction, poverty in our countries is on the increase. Its eradication therefore remains the greatest challenge facing most developing countries. Central to poverty alleviation is the issue of employment, a sector which has basically stagnated in most developing countries. Governments are constrained by policies of fiscal and budgetary austerity which were imposed on them by the international financial institutions. These imposed austerity measures leave Governments with hardly any resources to initiate job-creation programmes that will lead to gainful employment for young people in the productive sector of the economy.

In his report on the Millennium Assembly (A/54/2000), the Secretary-General painted a stark picture of this phenomenon, when he said that the world was facing a major challenge of youth unemployment, which was an outgrowth of the youth bulge. The International Labour Organization (ILO) has estimated that 60 million young people are searching for work but cannot find any. This is a situation which creates ripples in other areas of our social existence, such as criminality, including trans-border criminal offences. It can rightly be said that unemployment is the mother of almost all other social problems facing humanity today, among which one can count prostitution, drug-trafficking and trafficking in human beings, to mention but a few.

In this connection, the proposal by the Secretary-General to establish a high-level policy network on youth employment is a highly commendable initiative. I wish to assure him of the full support of the Group of 77 and China in the pursuit of this endeavour.

Although a lot has been achieved in the field of human health, and although life expectancy has increased, especially in developed countries, a recent report of the World Health Organization (WHO) indicates that the poor are disproportionately affected by diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and so on. More than 95 per cent of HIV infections are in developing countries, with about 70 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa, while 300 million are affected by malaria annually, of whom 2 million die. There is an increasing need for a concerted international effort to combat the spread of these diseases. In that connection, I wish to assure the Secretary-General of the full commitment of African countries to the Roll Back Malaria campaign of the World Health Organization, as demonstrated by the recent summit which took place in Abuja, Nigeria, where a definitive plan of action was at the core of the many important decisions that were

reached on how to combat this deadly disease in Africa.

Let me mention here that a key decision of the Group of 77 summit in Havana was the establishment of a South-South health delivery programme to support medical services in many of the poorer member countries. I am glad to report that the implementation of this programme is well under way in Abuja, Nigeria, from which it is being coordinated.

Education in most developing countries has not fared any better, though we all agree that it is the cardinal aspect of all developmental policies and plans. Education is the key to the new global knowledge- and technology-driven economy; and in developing countries education can provide us with the opportunity to overcome many of the obstacles which impede our social and economic transformation. In my country, great attention is being devoted to education, especially to basic education, which will equip our young people with the opportunities they need to optimize their potential and make positive contributions to society.

Our commitment to accelerating the development of Africa and of the least developed countries remains largely unfulfilled. In the Secretary-General's report on the Millennium Assembly, he observed:

> "Nowhere is a global commitment to poverty reduction needed more than in Africa south of the Sahara, because no region of the world endures greater human suffering. The latest estimates indicate that sub-Saharan Africa has the largest proportion of people who live on less than $1 a day. ... In the 1990s, [Africa] grew more slowly than any other group of middle- or low-income countries." (*A/54/2000, para. 139*)

While private capital flows to Africa are a tiny fraction of global flows, capital flight from some of those countries is several times more than their gross domestic product, and total outstanding external debt exceeds entire gross national products, with some countries using more than 25 per cent of export earnings to service debt. Extractive industries dominate the region's economy, depleting resources at an alarming rate.

The problems that face humanity are enormous. But by placing the concerns of the people at the centre of planning and decision-making processes, we have begun the countdown in earnest. All we need now is the necessary political will and we shall overcome the remaining pockets of resistance which impede social progress and the attainment of a better life for all humankind.

The burden of external debt continues to weigh heavily on many Group of 77 countries, constituting a serious obstacle in their efforts to achieve social objectives of development. Debt service ratio remains very high, making it extremely difficult to mobilize local resources that can propel social renewal and poverty eradication. The latest World Bank report indicates that the heavy flow of aid into our countries from the two international lending agencies did little to ignite sustained economic growth. Indeed, sub-Saharan Africa, which was considered more advanced in the early 1960s than some other regions in the developing world, receded in the last three decades of the last century. The report indicates that 48 African countries have a collective economic output that does not surpass that of Belgium. The question is begged: have the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, perhaps unwittingly, made Africa poorer through unwholesome policies?

In this connection, the world must heed the World Bank's call on rich countries to open their markets to imports from Africa. The World Bank had observed in its report that wealthy nations collectively spend $300 billion to subsidize and protect their farmers against foreign competition. This figure equals Africa's total annual output. Hence it can be seen that Africa is suffering double jeopardy: first, from the burden of external debt that leaves them with no resources to incite social renewal and, secondly, from the protectionist policies of the advanced countries against imports from developing countries.

Our presence here today is a testimony of our collective will to look into areas where progress has not been made with a view to rectifying past deficiencies. Meeting our set target of putting people at the centre of all development, but particularly social development, requires resources that are disproportionately distributed among us. If we are to target our energies towards addressing the eradication of poverty, providing employment and promoting social justice and social integration, the debt issue in developing countries must be seriously addressed and permanently resolved. Creditor nations must immediately commit themselves to debt remission for developing countries, so as to provide these countries

with the basis for economic renewal and social advancement.

In conclusion, I would like to say that the world has the capacity to eradicate poverty, and this session should give us the opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to give our peoples hope and assurance for enhanced quality of life. They need it, and they must not be denied.

The President: I thank the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria for his statement.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.